

Agency Budget Hearing
Appropriations Committee - Connecticut General Assembly

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Submitted Testimony

Matt Fleury, President & CEO - Connecticut Science Center, Inc.

The Connecticut Science Center is dedicated to enhancing science education statewide, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. In addition to being one of Connecticut's top destinations, the Science Center is a leading provider of professional development for teachers, and partners with the State of Connecticut Department of Education, school districts and schools to foster science interest and achievement.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony concerning proposed changes to funding for the Connecticut Science Center. This testimony is offered in recognition of the significant challenges before you, and with appreciation for your past support.

Established in partnership among the State of Connecticut and corporate and individual donors, the Connecticut Science Center has served approximately 2.5 million people since its opening in 2009. The Science Center is actively working to help communities around the state to foster student interest and achievement in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. Acknowledging the extremely challenging budget choices before you, the Science Center has absorbed successive reductions in state support in the spirit of shared sacrifice. However, the importance of the state's consistent investment, even at necessarily reduced levels during difficult times, should not be underestimated. Specific, line item support directed by the General Assembly provides a transparent and vital source of funding that helps to sustain the Science Center, a non-profit institution that relies substantially on hard-to-predict donations and earned revenues. Your designation also reflects the State's continued commitment to the Science Center, its own creation, as an anchor institution in Connecticut.

As you evaluate the continuation of funding for the Science Center and many other needs, it is important to recognize the nearly immediate return this investment can generate both in terms of state and local tax revenues and economic benefit. We estimate that the Science Center's total economic impact exceeds \$17 million, including tax revenues which themselves well exceed the current line item appropriation.

However, the benefits of the Science Center extend much farther. The Science Center served over 325,000 people in 2016, including nearly 70,000 school students on STEM-oriented field trips and over 10,000 in science outreach programs across the state. Children, families and other visitors enjoyed inspiring experiences with science that enhanced their quality of life and their prospects. Last year we delivered professional development sessions to 1,000 teachers, enabling them to become more effective science educators. In addition, we work closely with dozens of schools to help them strengthen STEM education. At a time when Connecticut has doubled-down on science, technology and engineering, the Science Center serves a crucial role in engaging, inspiring and preparing the workforce of our very near future.

The Connecticut Science Center, created by the State of Connecticut and relying on an ongoing public/private commitment, is an immensely valuable asset to citizens throughout our state. Funding of the Connecticut Science Center is rewarded with multiples of the State investment every year, and it is an investment in the future of our state and our economic vitality, as we inspire students with the foundational skills that will transform them into a competitive workforce.